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# THE CRAYON.

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## EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARY OF AN ARTIST.

BY JACK TUPPER.

December 5th, 1836.

ADMITTED, to-day, a student of the Royal Academy; advised by my father to keep a diary, and to commit to paper whatever I remember of my first ideas, aspirations, and attempts.

Can remember having an early love for cats, paper kites, throwing stones, squirting water, running fast, and making "the sun run." I can remember that all these things gave me the same kind of pleasure; such as I now take in Art; so that I seldom design now without thinking of some of them; especially of dusk-time in the nursery, when we used to stand, backs to the fire, and watching our shadows start up and down on the opposite wall.

At that time I had a pet cat, with a very round face, which (colors, penknives, and pencils, not being allowed us) I was obliged to "tear out" in paper, and stick upon the window. I also took his portrait in dough (when I could get it). Took other portraits also in dough; was much dissatisfied with their appearance when baked.

From these and some subsequent attempts in mud, my father concludes that my talent is for sculpture. I think I like painting and verse-making quite as well. [Note.—My father entreats me to be sincere in the registration of my present ideas, and has promised not to overhaul my diary.]

The next thing I remember was a trouble. My brother explained to my that the sun did not run; and I left off trying "to make him." I got a basin of water, however, and started him about the ceiling; and turned him into the opposite houses upon a looking-glass; am not sure these were my own discoveries—might have been of my brother's suggesting—liked the practice, anyway; got thrashed, felt hurt, but not ashamed.

We have extracted these juvenile trivialities in consideration of the author's evident conviction that they were influential exponents of his subsequent choice of a profession. Passing some pages, to the same effect, we shall resume the introduction to the diary, at a point whence the writer dates his first *properly* artistic inspiration, as follows:

It was a hot day in summer. I had been blowing soap-bubbles, and puffing them up the garden wall, behind which rose the tower of the church. Here, rarified by the sun's heat, the bladders rose of themselves, and sailed slowly, straightly, and wonderfully up the tower into the sky! Into the saucer went my pipe again; it was again successful! I felt myself the recipient of Heaven's grace—there was no pause. The top of the tower! I could command it! (there was no anxiety on this head.) It was the harbor now whence my flotilla embarked for the open sky; but then began the doubt and the adventure. My traffic went on accordingly until, what with heat and sheer expenditure of breath, I all at once, found myself feeling as thin, empty, and luminous, as I fancied the bubbles felt. My arms dropped down; and I remember

carrying them, pendent and shaken loose, as I walked up the garden, listening to the cool flapping of my Holland pinnafore. Should have left this out of my diary had it not provoked, I may say, the incident which makes me an artist. I was hot, and defying trespass and earwigs, for cool, walked in between certain rows of scarlet-runners, now grown close in shady alleys, and joined overhead; sat down on an inverted flower-pot, might have fallen asleep. I can't remember; but, by and by, opened my eyes upon a new sight. There were leaves all about me of a new color, changed as paper changes with oil spilt on it. I saw blots of shadow, blue angles, gold, and red, and sparkles, dancing dust, and spinning-flies; seeing all through a silvery haze, and listening to a buzzing mystery. I was fixed here—my mother knows how long—in the most æsthetical of all academies; and remember stamping up the garden steps with a consciousness that my ears were boxed on both sides of my head; but with a consciousness that I had discovered a new world, in Bean-land, cheap at any cost. And I am conscious, at this time, that, whenever I shall carve, sing, paint, or write aught of fairy, spiritual, or preternature, the *locus standi* of my inspiration will always be between two rows of beans, pulled up and burned, A.D. eighteen hundred and —, *i. e.*, somewhere in the first half of the 19th century.

\* \* \* \* \*

We must now lose sight of our author for some time; and find him again at the age of eleven copying from prints, &c.

The young world of Art-notions that were beginning to arrange themselves in me, were at once discomposed at the sight of these Prints. I had hitherto copied nature, with becoming timidity; or the Pumps, Paving-stones, Windmills, Stiles, Belfries, and Bridges, of "Elementary Drawing-Books;" which, though indicated principally in outline, were, nevertheless, unmistakable; each a legible equivalent of Tile, Buttress, or Weathercock; a dot having an assignable value: it was a nail in a wall. But these prints, half-pictures! that were to induct me *safely* and *gradually* into the labyrinthine difficulties of irregular surfaces (I had tried trees, from nature, and been beaten); and to bring me from the *outsides* to the *centres* of things; and to stuff them with solidity!—these prints, I say, at once shook my belfries and towers to pieces, pulled down my bridges, drew out my nails, and involved them all in a profound and impenetrable mystery of "hatelings," "dottings," "loopings," "zig-zags," "herring-bonings," and "corkscrews!" Was this the way to do trees? I supposed it was, and tried to comprehend it; and, when I could not, copied them one by one, herring-boning and all.

I saw my expectation, that nature could be represented in the mass as she could be in detail, was disappointed, was perhaps unfounded; and, moreover, that trees and other complicated things, which grew, as it were, by chance and confusedly, could be imitated only by chance dashes and

confused touches of the pencil. I discovered, likewise, how the rapid growth of weeds could be adequately signified by holding the pencil vertically, and pressed upon by the contending forces of the thumb and finger, and then letting go the finger, and suffering the thumb to jerk up the point; throwing off weeds as it were spontaneously by a *natural* process; and, where the knotted strength of oak branches crooked, in angular impatience, under impediment and difficulty, how the hand, strongly clutching a pencil; might "rein in" in its strength into angular crooks and notches of similar significance; how the point might "trickle down" the paper, in rapid bunches of touches, to simulate the scattered pendulousness of the Birch—how semi-symmetrical *angular* loopings threw off the ash; and concentric *round* ones, the chestnut. I re-arranged my system of ideas. I had been wrong; I was now right again. I inspired my hand with the sentiment of growth, and sprouted vegetables with facility.

But this was not my first resolution in Art, for sometime before this a friend and amateur [*name suppressed*.—*Ed.*], had generously undertaken to give me some instructions, and sent me to a gallery of Old Masters, where, in order to test the worth of my natural stock in trade, I was to mark in the catalogue those works I liked best. And I think I can appreciate his anxiety, originating, doubtlessly, in that uncertainty which infects not only amateurs, but professors themselves.

My friend \* \* \*, like most amateurs, made no pretensions whatever to originality, seldom even sketched from nature, and never from life; but had, notwithstanding, an imposing sweep of hand, whilst copying an old print, impressing you with a feeling of the formidable, as the blank space vanished beneath his touch, and curve on curve invaded the cartoon-like field of his evolutions. A style to accompany a rapid improvisation of ideas—till you looked, and saw him looking, at a little engraving!—suggesting the ludicrous anomaly that amuses an evening party, when one man, with his hands behind him, makes a speech, a modest maiden attempt, whilst another "does the action" so forcibly, as to throw the speaker quite into the shade—and behind the gesticulator, who is actually behind him! But I am wandering from my subject, and speaking perhaps too lightly of one who gave me my elementary knowledge.

I went to these Old Masters (it was the Dulwich collection), and felt a little disturbed, as I wrote down my name, because of the ordeal that awaited me. The old man at the door had suspicions of my age, and expressed them; but I passed by asking, at once a *suppressio veri* and *argumentum ad hominem*, "if he thought I could not read the regulations on the card?" This "white lie" gave me little uneasiness at the time, as I acted under orders; but I think of it now because it was a lie, in *limine*, and followed, strange to say, by a quibbling uncertainty of what was right and wrong in Art, so soon as I had entered the place..

Now there was a bare-breasted figure, with prominent shoulders and head held back, at the very end of the gallery. This was the first thing I saw. Nearer, an apposition of subjects, sacred and profane, somewhat peculiar. Pan and Syrinx—Religion in the Desert—The descent from the Cross—a Tiger Hunt. There was an ale-house—there was a cathedral—there was a bull—there was Louis XIV. Then I read in the catalogue: "Venus and Cupid," "Virgin and Child," "Mars and Venus," "Two Saints." I had predetermined to mark nothing till I had seen all, so went on introducing myself to "Holy Families," "Soldiers gaming," "Friars before crosses," and "Farriers shoeing horses:" likewise to "The Arch of Constantine." Then I sat down. Spite of my determinations, I foresaw the difficulty of selecting from this medley; not owing to its diversity, but something else. I had been warned not to mark those pictures whose subjects I liked best; but such as I preferred for their *treatment* and *execution*. Now I was under orders, and thought about it. "No such difficulty had been anticipated as I walked to the gallery, scrutinizing trees, clouds, and shadows, in order to give an infallible judgment of what most resembled nature. I saw here, at once, that resemblance to nature was not always aimed at by those masters most capable of representing her. Titian's figures, here, in the *sunshine*, with flesh-tints like nature, cast *brown* shadows, which were *blue* all along the Dulwich Road!" I had noticed these blue shadows, on a gravel path, some days before; and my father, who was giving me some instruction in optics, as a preliminary to Perspective—he was a mathematical man—explained the appearance satisfactorily, concluding with this remark: that shadows cast by sunlight were always, more or less, blue, in spite of all reflections. He also showed me how, when portions of light came through a hole, they always get larger, the greater their distance from the hole; and that the light passing through the smallest hole in a cloud, would be much larger than a man, where it reached him on earth: that a cloud, therefore, could not diversify a small object with lights and shadows as a tree might, if near enough. This I knew to be true. It was also true that a figure before me, was painted with its feet upon the ground, and the sun upon them; but no sunshine upon the ground where they stood; yet, there was no object near to account for this. It was clear, therefore, that the object of the great masters was not to imitate nature, or to imitate her only so far as she seconded some other object which they had in view. What this object was, was the question.

I had heard that a good painter would select from nature whatever was most *beautiful*; the thought struck me, and the mystery was clear. My conscience, however, was not clear! I stood schooling myself into an admiration of the best masters, whose names I had heard of, and marking them down in a catalogue, so soon as I found the admiration awakened. I marked nothing but Guido, and Titian, and Rubens, and Rembrandt! I even passed many masters, whom I since know to be famous, and honestly, in one sense, had no grounds whereon to prefer them, the criterion of nature abolished.

I felt self-compromised, notwithstanding, for arriving at the truth by means which my patron had not stipulated for. It was dishonest and a lie. I would own my deficiency—a deficiency I could hardly own to myself—I quibbled. A deficiency I ought with alacrity to supply. I was here to supply it. Good! One hour before the St. John of Guido, with my pencil in my mouth, I *did* admire it, and I ticked him down.

I walked home pondering my conduct. The evening was fair, and shadows fell right across the road. Two or three village children, going home tired, seemed to me ministers of silence; thrushes called out; and I began to conjecture, of the village, if it produced trees with steady branches, silent children, and sentinel birds, to challenge the traveller? For I was in temple-aching excitement, that which comes after the mind has been dispersed; and the sudden reduction of multitudinous nature into simple sunset and shadow, made me strange and violent—a thing trees would wonder at. I got into a lane, I remember, and saw where the sun, it seemed, dropped, at the end of the earth, and broke into loose embers that glowed and burned. Fire lined the hedges, fire pierced the trees, fire was under the hills. It seemed that day I had divorced nature for something I fancied higher, and in the evening found her more awful in unapproached majesty than she had been hitherto. I was confused, wildered, and stood up on the stile, shouting "Grandeur! glory! The sun is broken, and the West on fire!" Then a flight of crows, rising from the hill, swept black across the gold on to the North.

I went home, seriously meditating; for I was a boy, and thought seriously of what now I sometimes laugh at, though not always.

Here follows some remarks of the writer upon the change his ideas underwent after this visit to the gallery of old masters; and he seems to attribute the conscientious scruples and mental perturbation which accompanied the change to his *then* ignorance of (what he *here* calls) the "great fact" that, in order to acquire a sense of the sublime in Art, it is indispensable to study the great masters with becoming reverence: adding much, in effect, the same as Reynolds taught in his Discourses concerning "High Art," selecting from Nature, abstract form, and ideal beauty; concluding with a firm belief in the position, that Fine Art *must*, by some artificial means, impress the senses *at once*, attract the eye, and never repel it.

As it will be interesting to contrast these ideas of the author, or, what he calls, "his first revolution" with others on the subject, jotted at a subsequent period; and as we do not mean to anticipate, it is necessary to note this as a point in the diary to which there will be occasion to refer hereafter.

HAVING made a careful study of some boats and other objects on the beach, which occupied him the greater part of the day, towards evening, when he was preparing to leave, the sun burst out low in the horizon, producing a very beautiful, although totally different effect, on the same objects; and, with his usual enthusiasm, he immediately set to work again, and had sufficient light to preserve the effect. The fishermen seemed deeply to sympathize with him at this unexpected and additional labor, as they called it; and endeavored to console him by saying, "Well, never mind, sir; every business has its troubles."—*Life of Collins.*

## SKETCHES OF INDIA.

### III.

#### STREET LIFE AT MADRAS—ST. THOMAS'S MOUNT.

So much of native life is passed out of doors, that the best place for studying the lower classes of Hindoos is the open street. It affords constantly shifting scenes of the most entertaining pantomime, for the common affairs of every-day life are carried on with unconcern before every chance spectator. The love of privacy is the growth of civilization, and the charm of retirement is most felt where social life is most attractive. A cold climate drives the poor to seek the shelter of houses, a hot one drives them out of doors.

There is little of the splendor of the East at Madras, but much of its squalor. The city is flat, and the streets, for the most part, very narrow and dirty. The mud houses of the poorer natives are low, close, and dark, without chimneys or windows. Some of the best of them are whitewashed, or gayly painted over with grotesque, childish figures, of red and yellow gods, green elephants, or blue men. A raised mud seat runs along in front, sheltered by the projecting thatch or tiles of the roof, and at the door is often a charpoy, or low bedstead, on which some one of the inmates of the hut lies lounging or asleep. Here and there is the two-storied dwelling of a black Portuguese or Armenian merchant, with latticed windows and carved verandahs. The walls are covered with stucco, originally white or yellow, now stained and blackened by the rains and sun as if by smoke, or peeling off in great pieces from the brick. Over much of the place there is an oppressive air of decay and neglect. At every turn one is met with a horrid compound of smells; of rancid glee, or clarified butter, of fried cocoanut oil, and of the stench of open and stagnant gutters steaming in the sun. "Ditches, dust, fried oil, curry, and onions, are the best of the Madras smells," said a clever English woman who knew the place well. It is not strange that cholera never leaves the city.

The English all live out of town. I knew but one family of white people who lived in the Black Town, as it is called, and they were American Missionaries, who had settled there that they might be in the very heart of their work. They were kind, homely, self-devoted people. They had been in India for many years. Every morning the father distributed medicines to the poor sick beggars who came to him for aid. Every evening he and his son went into the streets, to preach the gospel to all who would listen. Every day the mother and daughter gave away food, and tried to collect at their house women and children whom they might teach. The low, soft voices, and the eyes of these women full of a tender and serene sadness, told of their self-devotion and of their separation from home. They spoke with interest of America, but as if they had given it up, with all that they had once loved in it, for ever; as if their longings once more to see it had been disciplined into resignation; and as if they looked beyond death, beyond the bitterness of death in a strange land, to the joy of a reunion with the friends from whom they were parted by life. Their work was